DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 365 TM 028 925

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TITLE Apperception and Meaning Making in the World of Qualitative Inquiry: An Examination of Novice Qualitative Researchers.
PUB DATE 1996-04-12
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, April 8-12, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitudes; Beliefs; *College Students; *Constructivism (Learning); Higher Education; *Qualitative Research; *Research Methodology; *Researchers
IDENTIFIERS *Essentialism

ABSTRACT

Becoming a qualitative researcher requires an extensive education. The training is rigorous and the knowledge base is vast, but the most difficult realization for many novice researchers is the heavy emphasis on the "self as research instrument." This study examined novice researchers from three introductory qualitative methods classes. Surveys and interviews completed by approximately 40 students were used to inquire into the world of these beginning qualitative researchers. An emergent design was used, with a constructivist orientation. Data suggested that although there were many common experiences and instructional needs, there were real differences in the behavior of the participants and experiences the participants had. Two dimensions of difference seemed to emerge from the data: (1) participants seemed to approach the subject/object of their study with profound variance; and (2) participants seemed to have varying, often opposing, orientations to the process of interpretation and making sense of their research. Findings are presented in the form of participant thoughts, feelings, and behavior that illustrate these two themes. These data are presented with a theoretical framework consisting of intersecting continua, the intersection of what the researchers termed "apperception," with the novice researcher's orientation termed either essentialist or constructivist. The instructional implications of the data are discussed. (Contains 22 references.) (SLD)

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Apperception and Meaning Making in the World of Qualitative Inquiry: An Examination of Novice Qualitative Researchers

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TM028925

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April, 8-12 1996, New York City

Apperception and Meaning Making in the World of Qualitative Inquiry: An Examination of Novice Qualitative Researchers

Abstract

Becoming a qualitative researcher requires an extensive education. One must learn the fundamental assumptions, learn to collect and interpret data, and often write a representation of one's findings in a digestible manner. The training is rigorous, and the knowledge base vast, but possibly the most difficult realization for many novice qualitative researchers is the heavy emphasis on the "self as research instrument."

Our study examined novice researchers from three introductory qualitative methods classes. We used surveys and interviews to inquire into the world of these beginning qualitative researchers. We used an emergent design, and intended a constructivist orientation to our subject.

We initially examined the experiences of our participants in an effort to paint a picture of their common reality. Yet, our data suggested that although there were many common experiences and instructional needs, there were real differences in the behavior and the experiences our participants had. Two dimensions of difference seemed to emerge from the data. 1) Participants seemed to approach the subject/object of their study with profound variance, and 2) Participants seemed to have varying, often opposing orientations to the process of interpretation and making sense of their research. We present our findings in the form of participant thoughts, feelings and behavior that illustrates these two themes. We chose to represent this with a theoretical framework consisting of two intersecting continua; degree of what we termed "apperception," by the novice researcher's orientation of either what we termed as "essentialist" or "constructivist." Finally, we offer what we felt were the instructional implications that our data suggested.

Apperception and Meaning Making in the World of Qualitative Inquiry: An Examination of Novice Qualitative Researchers

What are the struggles of beginning qualitative research students? Consult one of the many available texts and one would assume that it was a matter of obtaining the various skills and techniques outlined in the book. Learn to interview, collect field data, analyze, and write the results, and the beginning researcher's problems are solved. Ask the students, at least the participants in this study, and the response is something very different. It is not the simple techniques outlined in their text that are difficult to understand. In fact, most saw the text as too easy and referred to it as a "cookbook approach that answered only the basic questions."

Instead, our participants had come to recognize that the most important instrument of data collection is the "self", and with that came a number of questions that extended beyond what was offered in their text. They wondered how their individual personalities shaped the data analysis and collection in their studies, and they wondered how their personalities affect the interaction with the participants in their studies. To some, searching for the answers to these questions was liberating and provided a vehicle for self and academic expression not possible with quantitative research. For others, the search was not so satisfying. They wondered how the self could be a reliable and valid instrument and felt that the experience was at best an uncomfortable one. They were important issues to our participants because they signaled a recognition of the liberating and yet burdening experience of the self as the instrument of data collection, and, appropriately, they became the focus of this study.

Purpose

Our purpose in conducting this study was to complete a limited emergent-design qualitative study that examined how qualitative researchers manage the problems of conducting their

first qualitative study and add to the body of knowledge in qualitative research instruction. Our questions included; what experiences do novice qualitative researchers go through? what effect does instruction have on that experience? Also, what characterizes novice researchers as a group? who are they and how does that affect their research?

The Research Sites

Two neighboring universities were chosen as the sites for this study. While there were a number of other possible universities in neighboring towns, these two universities were chosen for their convenient location and interest expressed by the students to participate in this study. A total of four qualitative methods classes are offered by the two universities. Our focus was primarily confined to three of these courses.

Methodology

Data for this study were collected over a twelve week span from early fall 1995 to early spring 1996. A lengthy survey was administered to all members of the focus groups as well as to purposively selected others who could be considered novice qualitative researchers. Approximately forty surveys were completed, out of those, about twenty volunteered to be interviewed. All of the students were currently involved in a qualitative research project and class or had recently finished a class.

Interviews lasted approximately one half hour and were semi-structured and open-ended (Lofland & Lofland, 1985; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Triangulation and member checking were used to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wolcott, 1988).

Our data analysis was based on constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We began with broad questions initiated in the surveys to develop early theories. As we moved between collection, interpretation, and theory formation (Hubermann & Miles, 1994), we found themes that were best represented by dimensions. This led us to the application of a modified 2 x 2 matrix (Reed & Furman, 1992). But instead of exhaustive,

contrasting factors, our data suggested two interposed continua. We moved our analysis between our data and our emergent grounded theory often. We spent many evenings sharing our respective insights with on another. This collaboration both stimulated our creative energies, as well as provided a further source of reliability and trustworthiness to our analysis (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). But there was a benefit in theory generation, working collaboratively may have been in many ways more difficult. This was especially true in the process of writing. It was difficult not to create a paper that appeared schizophrenic.

Our research orientation was by intention "constructivist" (Schwandt, 1994). We attempted to explore the world of our participants with no pre-judgements or front-loaded hypothesis. But while our intentions were to construct the relative experience of these researchers our data and our instincts often lead us to something appearing like "realist" oriented conclusions (Hubermann, 1994, p.429). Our search for constructed meanings lead us to an analysis of differences and what often appeared to be quasi-traits.

As researchers, we both have a deep interest in qualitative research and plan to complete qualitative dissertations, but neither of us had given much thought to the idea of researching qualitative research. It seemed an odd idea, if not a bottomless pit. How could someone who was still learning to do qualitative research study others also learning to do qualitative research? But the opportunity to examine our own experience through this study, and our participants, had an irresistible appeal. And when we began to lose focus or motivation during the study, we were reminded that "this was a national paper presentation, and there could potentially be hundreds of people watching."

While we were, in many ways, not much more advanced than our own participants, this study provided us the opportunity reexamine our own experiences as beginning researchers in a new light. Our participants and their stories were the catalyst for much of our growth, and we are thankful for their participation. After interviews, we often shared research experiences chatting about this issue in a study or how many hours we had labored on what seemed such a simple problem. They were powerful experiences that helped us to

realize how much we had grown throughout this study. We were no longer struggling with the many of the introductory problems of qualitative research, and both of us could bring some experience, albeit still very limited, to the process of completing a qualitative study. We hoped to draw on these powerful experiences and speak from our "more experienced" perspective without forgetting that we, like our participants, are still students learning and growing.

Limitations

While we have worked to create a credible study, the research presented here is not without its limitations. First, while the participants in this experiment were certainly enthusiastic and helpful, it was impossible to shadow any of the students throughout his/her study. Our data represents almost entirely participant perceptions. Many had already completed a large part of the data collection during their study. With the continued cooperation of the students, data collection should include field and classroom observations. Until then, however, this study should be viewed as a work in progress.

The fieldwork

Nestled in the rolling hills and wheat fields of the western United States and nearly a two hour drive from a major city, Coal Creek is a sleepy, small town ideal for the serious study of the residing university students and faculty. Of the 18,000 residents, most make their livings at Coal Creek University (CCU) or on one of the surrounding farms. CCU is about eighty years old and currently has about 11,000 students studying towards undergraduate and graduate degrees. In many cases, the students from this study were doctoral students in the field of education at CCU or its neighboring university, but often came from other disciplines to take one of the few qualitative methods courses offered at these universities.

The public schools in Coal Creek were the sites for much of the research that our students completed. Their are a handful of elementary sites that feed into one junior high and one high school. They stretch out into the suburbs and rest beside the drooping

willows that line the winding roads. The schools, like the homes that surround them, are old and beginning to show the signs of ware. Construction signs block the doors and reroute the teachers and students to different exits and entrances. Playground equipment is old; a broken swing, a rusted slide, or a basketball hoop without its net are all common sights. Even the administration building is beginning to deteriorate. District executives work in a renovated unused school building. Offices are inconveniently strung along halls where meetings with other executives require a long walk across floorboards that squeak from age and ware.

Still, the public schools in which our students spent much of their time are not without their charm. They are a reflection of the neighborhoods that they are a part of and offer one more piece of data in the story of the schoolchildren's lives and education that our students set out to tell throughout the fall semester of 1995. The struggles that our students had in telling the stories within these schools and neighborhoods is the topic of this study. The participants in our study are all graduate students earning either masters or doctoral degrees in education at CCU. While some had completed small qualitative studies, all identified themselves as beginning researchers.

Findings

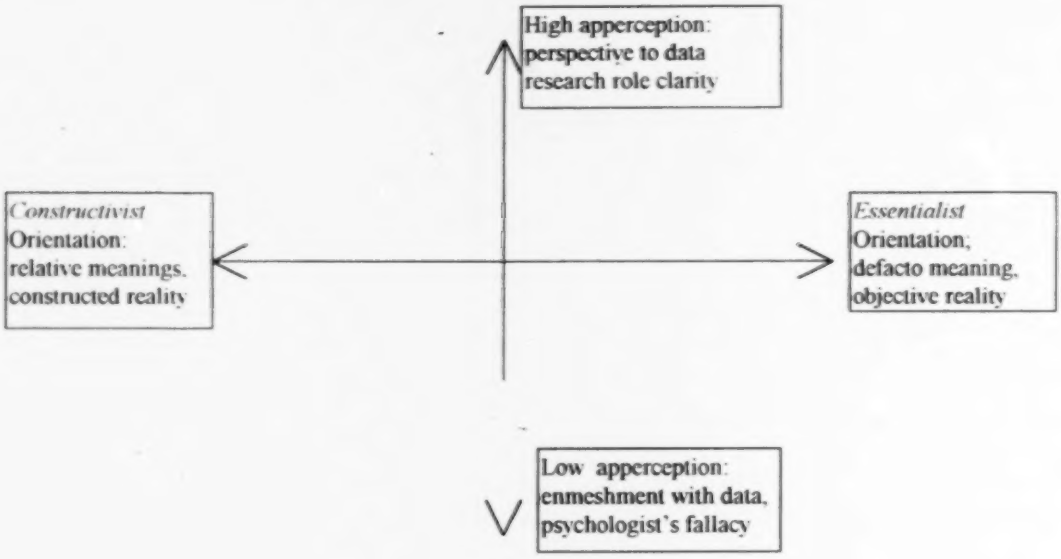
We decided to present what our data suggested to us in three parts. First, we propose a theoretical representation of our data in the form of a matrix of two intersecting continua. Second, we present examples of participant behavior that illustrates the interaction and development of the two continua. Finally, we offer what we saw as the instructional implications of our data.

Grounded Theoretical Framework

The preceding chart illustrates the two intersecting dimensions representing what we found in our examination of the novice researchers. The vertical axis represents the relationship of the researcher to his/her data. The horizontal axis represents the orientation of the researcher to the process of interpretation of meaning.

Chart 1. Intersection of researcher behavioral continua:

Researcher relationship to data (vertical) by his/her orientation to meaning making (horizontal)



In the above diagram, the vertical axis represents student behavior regarding their relationship to, and perception of their object(s) of study. This scale characterizes the participants' degree of aesthetic knowing and their consummatory ability to "see" their data. We term this "apperception" borrowed from Elliott Eisner (Eisner, 1985). He defines this as the "developed ability to experience the subtleties of form" (Eisner, 1985, p.28). The high end of the scale is characterized by the exhibition of clear sight and a necessary distance to one's object of study. The researcher's role is clear and they can "see" without being hindered by either pre-decisions of what they are looking for, or an impulse to become part of the their data. On the low end of the scale, participants exhibit behavior that shows a lack of role understanding and insight in general. Perspective and distance are lost, and often the researcher finds themselves judging the quality of the performance of their

subjects, prescribing cures, or going completely "native." This is often characterized by what has been termed the "psychologist's fallacy."

The critical ability to achieve a high level of "connoisseurship" or the art of apperception (Eisner, 1985, p.28) is often difficult for the researcher trained as an educator. Webb and Glense (1992) suggest that educators often have a very established notion of what they think should be going on in schools, and thus, "it is tempting for students to use qualitative research to promote their own vision what is proper and to criticize everything else." As Berger and Berger (1972) observe, "familiarity breeds not so much contempt as much as blindness."

We struggled to make sense of the prevalence of this phenomenon in our subjects. We were very aware that our own judgments regarding what constitutes a proper research perspective could potentially be hindering our ability to maintain our vision and relational distance. Our feeling was that a quality termed "apperception" was appropriate to describe the relationship and role one took with regard to their subject, *because sight and relationship seemed to exist as companions*. When the researcher stood at a distance they could see what they may have missed if they were too close to their participants, topic, or setting.

Our participants, especially those trained in schools, often struggled to maintain the necessary perspective to see clearly or display what we term as high levels of "apperception" of their subject. We present this struggle in the efforts of a doctoral student named Jamie. After having taught English at the high school level for a number of years, Jamie returned to the elementary school to teach gifted students because "*she loved the little kids.*"

As a researcher, Jamie was active in the classroom and explained that she was *"working with the kids and helping to teach them and...design the units with the teachers."* Her 16 week study explored how sixth grade teachers integrate computers into their daily instruction. The school had purchased computers from grant money and after some discussion, the teachers had decided to introduce a word processing program, a graphics program, and the internet into their instruction.

About three weeks into her 16 week study Jamie realized that one of the four teachers participating in her study, Mrs. Rogers, had a very different opinion about how computers should be used for instruction. From the beginning, Jamie had enthusiastically supported the use of computers to enhance instruction and believed that the word processing and graphics programs could act as a catalyst in building students' creative and academic skills. Unfortunately, Mrs. Rogers did not share her excitement. She used computers to drill students on spelling and arithmetic and ignored the more creative uses that Jamie had envisioned.

> *If it had continued that she was part of the collaboration, I would have had to peruse and done more work with her. But as it turned out I will be working with somebody else. At this point, I don't need to get her vision. I felt very uncomfortable. It worked out that she was not available for an interview the times that I was out there, so I talked to other people whose vision I really respected. When she was available, I realized that I didn't need to talk to her. I was afraid--I didn't want to sound---I didn't want to make her defensive, so I had very carefully written a set of questions for her.' I never had to use them because--I didn't want her to feel like I was wondering why she was doing what she was doing.*

Jamie felt that she was in an awkward position. Not only did this conflict test her beliefs about instructional issues, but, more importantly, it forced Jamie to define her role at the elementary school. As a researcher, she would have to face Mrs. Rogers and conduct the interview, but this would not be easy. She worried that Mrs. Rogers would wonder why she was asking her about the activities in her classroom and begin to suspect that she does not approve of her teaching. Jamie even wrote a special set of questions so as not to anger Mrs. Rogers or make her feel defensive, but clearly Jamie did not want to ask Mrs. Rogers these questions or even assume the researcher role. It made her "uncomfortable".

Jamie chose instead to diminish her role as a researcher allowing her the comfort of talking to teachers whose vision she respected and avoiding any possible conflict with Mrs. Rogers. Outside of the researcher role, she could discard the new and still uncomfortable intellectual relativity (LeCompte, Millroy, Priessle, 1992) and instead draw on her more comfortable past experience as a teacher. Relationships would no longer be strained by

teachers feeling as if they were being evaluated, and Jamie would be able to react enthusiastically to the instruction she observed without Mrs. Rogers there.

Still, her decision was not without its problems. While discarding the researcher role allowed her more harmonious relationships with the faculty, the effects of losing intellectual relativity may have biased her interpretation of Mrs. Roger's instruction. Because her new role allowed her to draw on her own experience, Jamie felt that Mrs. Rogers' instruction could be judged against the basic truths of teaching, which, of course, Jamie knew. "I feel really like my purpose is not to criticize, and yet it's hard not to when basic truths, in my vision, are being ignored," was how she explained her judgment. Henry James (James, 1890/1950) described such a reliance on one's own experience as the "psychologist's fallacy". This is the tendency "to bestow own versions of reality on others and, when different versions of reality are inadvertently found, to criticize them as naive, foolish, or wicked" (p. 777).

LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle (1992) speculate that the psychologist's fallacy stems from the fact that too often education students receive very little training in the social science prior to entering their first research methods course, but they often have very strongly developed opinions regarding what classrooms and schools should be like. Their natural inclination is to promote that which is consistent with their own views and criticize or ignore anything else. While this study cannot confirm or refute LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle's (1992) explanation, it seems a possible explanation.

The horizontal axis within our theoretical framework (see Chart 1.) represents the subject's orientation to the process of making sense of what they see. We use the term "orientation" because it appeared to be often less a product of learning than an affinity. The relative affinities of our participants seemed to fall on a continuum. On one end, which we termed "constructivist," participants seemed to have high degrees of comfort with relativity and symbolic meanings in both data representation and personal ontology. They were at ease and adept at processing their data within the context of a socially constructed set of meanings (Berger & Luckman, 1967). On the other end of the continuum, which we termed "essentialist", participants exhibited more comfort viewing their data objectively.

They sought what "really was" - de facto - and attempted to describe it in empirical terms. They were not comfortable with relative meanings, and usually preferred to represent their findings in numbers and concrete behavior.

This dimension can best be seen in the relative efforts of John and Ellen to sense of their data. While Ellen would illustrate a constructivist orientation, John's experiences provides an insight into an essentialist orientation. John was currently enrolled in the masters in education program and described himself as being more comfortable with quantitative research. He explained that he had always associated research with statistics and objectivity commenting in our first interview, "I thought research was all statistically based." Understandably, he faced the prospects of completing his first qualitative study with a certain amount of trepidation.

John began his study by consulting Bogden & Bicklin's (1992) text. While commenting that he certainly appreciated the step-by-step approach, it left him with a number of unanswered questions. He wanted all of the details and contingencies as to how to design, execute, and write a qualitative study. Frustrated, he turned to what could be described as a more quantitative approach to completing his study. He first developed a statement that he would disprove, a null hypothesis, which he formed from his own experience as a school janitor. He remembered the teasing and taunts he had faced as a janitor, and reasoned that similar teasing would cause a change from an external locus of control to an internal locus of control in his subjects.

While his approach of beginning with a null hypothesis and his either/or question is perhaps better suited for a quantitative study than a qualitative one, it, more importantly, illustrates his comfort with essentialist oriented meaning making and research methods. John wanted very little to do with the ambiguity or the messy business of making meaning from qualitative questions or methods. He viewed his relationship to his data as that of a reporter commenting, "*I basically stated what I saw and heard.*" He wondered how one could assign observations and interviews meaning when they are so ambiguous. He explained,

> *I was troubled that I could not quantify the data, so I decided to go the route of writing down what I observed and let the participants decide.*

Despite his struggles with completing the assignment, John, ironically, considered his study a success. He had disproved his null hypothesis. And, after all, as John once said, *"Research should not be full of opinions."* Interestingly, In the half-hour interview, John made the statement three times, "*I really like qualitative research - it gives you the chance to give your opinion.*" This statement seems to suggest he viewed interpretation as synonymous with opinion, and further, the *self* could never really be a credible instrument of study.

Not surprisingly, many of our participants described themselves as individuals who see meaning as contextual and constructed. Of these several individuals, perhaps the most interesting was an experienced science teacher named Ellen from Alaska pursuing her Ph.D. in education. Her initial response to the qualitative approach to inquiry was, "*I have been doing this my whole life.*" She described herself as curious and an individual who is interested in why and how something happens.

> *I always have wanted to know why. I don't want to memorize the formula without understanding it, don't want to have the law in physics without really understanding it.*

Still, having studied physical sciences at the graduate level and having taught a course at CCU, one would expect that she would feel more comfortable with the deductive method, and that the ambiguity and subjectivity associated with qualitative research would make for an invalid form of research. But Ellen simply did not feel this way.

> *With quantitative research, you can't show that people hit a wall in the second week of instruction and then manage to get past and then manage to feel successful in the third week. You just give a pre- and a post (test) and you miss all of those wonderful things in between.*

In many ways, Ellen's comfort with qualitative research stems from what she perceives as the broader range of meanings one can draw from a qualitative study. Interested in the processes of learning, she sees quantitative research as lacking the ability

to describe many of the rich experiences that she has come to associate with the teaching and learning experience. Pre and posttest measures simply miss all of the "wonderful things in between". Further, she does not struggle much with the creativity and ambiguity associated with data collection. She sees herself as spontaneous and fully subscribes to the belief that data may have multiple meanings.

> *Anybody who think there is just one meaning is losing out...I can't be too spontaneous*

Examining the Interaction of the Two Continua

The two behavioral dimensions that we propose seemed to be independent. It was the case that subjects exhibited varying degree of the two orientations as well as demonstrated both high and low degrees of apperception. So we found that we could make even more sense of our participants' behavior if we examined how the two dimensions interacted. We offer little analysis of this interaction, preferring to present our data as representative of the four possible domains resulting from interposing the two dimensions into a quasi-matrix. These domains or quadrants are represented by the letters A, B, C, and D in the following chart.

Chart 2. Intersecting continua displayed as a matrix:
Cells representing the four resulting combinations

Orientation	**High** level of Apperception	**Low** level of Apperception
Constructivist	**A** (examination)	**C** (involvement)
Essentialist	**B** (prediction)	**D** (enmeshed judgment)

Here we offer the work of four participants as examples of the four quadrants. We are not suggesting that these locations are stable over time or even construct-valid domains. Yet, they hopefully act as a lucid framework providing context to our data for a further examination into our novice researcher participants as the primary instruments of their study. Quadrant A is represented by the research of Sara, B with that of Stan, C with that of Janet, and D with that of Elizabeth.

Two differing orientations, yet both with high levels of apperception

We begin in quadrant A where constructivist meaning making and high apperception interact. Sarah, a masters degree student in educational psychology at CCU, describes herself as a person who approaches the research process as a neutral observer without preconceptions about the data or an agenda for change.

> *I was trying to remain neutral...I was not claiming to know everything. I didn't have these predetermined categories, questions, or responses. I just kept an open mind.*

Sarah explored the dimensions of feminism in instruction and felt that her ability to step back from a problem and view it with apperception was a strong asset in her work. We asked her if it was easy to be in the researcher role. She replied, "Yes, but only after a lot of thought." She found herself struggling to keep a necessary distance from what she was studying, *"I found it hard...to remain neutral...in fact that was one of my fears that my questions would be too leading."*

She had come from a quantitative background like many of our subject, but now considered herself a qualitative researcher. She liked the way meaning making was part of qualitative methods, and liked the importance given to *"everyday processes of social life."* Upon completion of the course her intention was to do a qualitative thesis.

Stan's approach to his research could be described by a high degree of apperception combined with an essentialist orientation. Stan was engaged in studying the recruiting practices of Latter Day Saints missionaries. Perhaps realizing the sensitivity of

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Stan's approach to his research could be described by a high degree of apperception combined with an essentialist orientation. Stan was engaged in studying the recruiting practices of Latter Day Saints missionaries. Perhaps realizing the sensitivity of

such data, Stan felt that it was critical to define and separate the role of the researcher and the participant during a study. He felt that his job was to find data that was not only indisputable, but data that did not need interpretation. In his own words, "*Sometimes answers are just yes or no.*" In a sense, he is much like John who viewed himself as a reporter, observing the data and reporting what he saw. He believed that establishing these boundaries and maintaining apperception was the only way that one could create a credible study.

> *This research is only valid and credible when the researcher is too. Too often people have an ax to grind.*

Further, Stan felt that one's relationship to the data must be honest. Discounting the constructivist approach to generating meaning from data, he believed that too often researchers use their findings to simply bolster their own opinions and beliefs.

Two differing orientations with low degrees of apperception

> *But even if we give up looking for something, might we not yet find things through our looking? And if so, what might we expect them to be? Here a form of Meno's paradox takes over, which says that if we knew what we would find by looking we would have already found it.* (Jackson, 1990, p. 163)

In the preceding passage Phillip Jackson suggests one of the characteristics of low degrees apperception, as we define it. The researcher knows what they are looking for and as a result often miss a great deal. This could be paraphrased as, "expectancy breeds blindness."

In stark contrast to Stan, was Janet, who was unwilling to establish such clear boundaries between herself and her participants. A doctoral student in counseling psychology, Janet was hoping to study the learning process of her intern counselor. As a highly experienced counselor, Janet had supervised interns for several years hoping to become elementary school counselors. Yet despite her comfort and expertise with the supervisory role or perhaps because of it, Janet often struggled when she had to switch between her role as a researcher that of a supervisor.

Still, during our interviews, Janet often described her love for qualitative research and its inherent assumptions of data collection.

> *It (qualitative analysis) is what I have been doing for years as a counselor. I just didn't have a name for it...It was like coming home.*

Finally, there is Elizabeth who's research strategies represented to us quadrant D, and thus a difficulty separating herself from her subjects, but, unlike Janet, Elizabeth did not feel comfortable in the practice of constructing meaning. Elizabeth was a masters student in apparel design who focused her study on the struggles that her students experienced in trying to learn to design clothes. Throughout her study, Elizabeth expressed her desire to find data that supported her feelings that those in her department were misguided in their assumptions about the preparedness of the group of students she was assigned to teach.

> *I was looking for information to prove my point- that hey you guys (the program planners in her department) are making a mistake here (not doing an adequate job preparing students for the upper division courses)- they don't know these things."*

She saw the purpose of research as a way to support a hunch.

> *This is what qualitative research is all about- you take the information that your participants give you and then you use it for your research.....*

We asked, Elizabeth what she would call her research orientation. From the list of choices she said that her research was definitely *action research*. This raises a question that we pose rhetorically. What is research and what is not? In our efforts to examine and describe the behaviors of our participants we found ourselves wondering where one draws the line.

Implications for Instruction

While we have devoted our analysis in this paper to the characteristics of our participants as "research instruments," our data suggests a number of implications for the instruction of beginning qualitative researchers.

Two findings that we have not previously developed, we offer here. First, when there was a mismatch between "orientations", as they have been defined here, between the instructor and the students, we discovered a common outcome. When the typically constructivist approach of the instructor met with that of the essentialist oriented students, initially there was debate, but over time the students became apathetic though unchanged in their feelings. In each of the three courses we studied, in the early weeks the essentialist students reported making comments and engaging their opinions, but they said that the did less and less of it over the remaining weeks, until they became accustomed to keeping their thoughts to themselves. In the most extreme case, Stan recounts that the group of like-minded students in his class decided at one point to completely withdraw their conflicting views and become silent.

> *At the beginning we had discussions....people got the message not to argue.... and on break we would talk to each other and some would say - hey we better just shut-up"!.... (at a certain point in the semester) I just listened and pretended like I loved everything (the professor) said and agreed with all of it".*

In this case, the professor's use of her position as a "bully pulpit" of indoctrination into the qualitative way of thinking and operating had the opposite effect. Students became jaded and resentful, yet their silence may have been interpreted as conversion. This suggests that instructors be mindful of this potentiality and an alternate strategy to enlightening students to the validity and legitimacy of qualitative methods of inquiry.

A second observation we make here may be readily apparent, and it has been well described in previous literature (Webb & Glesne, 1992), but it seems to be the case that an introductory qualitative course can not be all things, instructors must make some choices. Courses likely can not be at the same time a thorough theory and knowledge base course, as well as a thorough methods and practice course. We found that what was emphasized was more readily achieved, and what was not, was not. We found our participants which enrolled in a course where theory, group discussion, and review of examples of quality studies were emphasized became well informed, but in almost every case never had the opportunity to struggle with more advanced problems such as data management and theory generation. We found that the two courses that emphasized regular progress toward a

finished study, produced a very practical understanding in their students. Moreover, these students left their first qualitative course in most cases with the perception of qualitative research as a deceptively difficult and time consuming endeavor. The step from looking at one's data and informally interpreting it, to the actually developing a paper with a sound theoretical framework, is a deceptively big step. We needed look no further than our own experiences with this paper to confirm in our minds the difficulty in that process. One course attempted, in part through time spent in outside reading, to "do it all." We found that most of the students in this class either burned-out or spent their time accomplishing the graded requirements and discarded their reading for the most part.

Although the skill of apperception, as we have defined it here, seems to be more natural for many of our participants, as well as colleagues we speak to, the condition of low levels of apperception seem to be remedied in part by a good understanding of research design. The participants in the two courses where study purpose and problem statement were developed as concepts, and concrete examples and non-examples were shared, in most cases the researchers perception of their role was improved. Their research ended-up being more explanatory and less judgmental. There also seemed to be benefit to the use of self-reflection. This provided the students in one of our classes the opportunity to self-critique and receive the one-on-one feedback of their professor.

Our research suggests, those characterized by a *constructivist* orientation, as we define it here, and consequently demonstrate high levels of affinity for qualitative methods of inquiry and its accompanying epistemologies, may have what could be considered defining qualities. We raise this merely as a possible area of future research. Yet there is indirect supported for this notion in previous research (Jacobs, 1990; Lee, 1990; Oleson, 1994; Wood & Inman, 1993; Briggs-Myers & McCaulley, 1992)

Viewing research orientation as an affinity rather than a product of indoctrination can spare the instructor potential misplaced energy and negative feelings directed toward his/her students. As matters of style, differences can be seen creatively. When competing paradigms can be seen as an instructional consideration as opposed to representing battle

lines, as is so often the case when it comes to the quantitative-qualitative debate (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990), it is our opinion that more learning and less resistance would take place.

Conclusions

Our examination into the world of the novice qualitative researcher has often led us back to ourselves. This paper has changed many times, and we are certain that we will see many things we want to change further after it is printed for the AERA. Yet, this very self-conscious process has been invaluable to our personal insight into our own tendencies as instruments of research.

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